DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 113 454 CE 004 950

AUTHOR Kurland, Norman D.
TITLE Study of Adult Education--Interim Report.
INSTITUTION New York State Education Dept., Albany.
PUB DATE 10 Dec 74
NOTE 21p.; For related documents, see CE 004 951-4

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Adult Counseling; *Adult Education; Adult Learning; *Continuous Learning; Educational Objectives; Educational Television; Financial Support; Futures (of Society); Information Dissemination; *Program Planning; *Program Proposals; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS New York

ABSTRACT

The first phase of the study on "The Education of Adults in New York in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century" was directed toward determining past, present, and future needs in adult education by conducting various interviews and examining literature in the field. Observations indicate that lifelong learning will be a central concern of education in the future, and much needs to be done to make lifelong learning available to all. A proposed "agenda for action" focuses on examination throughout the State of the Areas of: (1) financing, (2) information, (3) counseling, (4) adult learning goals, and (5) the role of the media, particularly television. Additional State or Federal financing for adult part-time students, information dissemination of adult education opportunities, and increased educational/vocational counseling are all viewed as major areas of concern. Proposed focus on adult learning goals has been narrowed to the initial key topic of adult knowledge regarding children and youth, with later emphasis on public affairs, occupations, and the elderly. Special attention is being directed to the role of television in adult education. Working papers on the five areas are being compiled to be used in future proposed consensus building conferences. (EA)

**********
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
**********

SEP 16 1975

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12224

ED113454

STUDY OF ADULT EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TO: Persons Interested in Adult Education

FROM: Norman D. Kurland

SUBJECT: Study of Adult Education - Interim Report

DATE: December 10, 1974

## I. BACKGROUND

The study on "The Education of Adults in New York in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century" that Commissioner Nyquist asked me to undertake began on July 1. The purpose of the study, as indicated in the Project Statement that was approved as the basis for the effort, was to determine what public policies and programs should be adopted to help meet the educational requirements of adults in the next quarter of the century and to deal with problems listed in the Statement under the following headings: "The Nation's Values", "Public Affairs Education", "Occupational Education", "Self-Fulfillment", and "Population Changes".

My assistant, Dr. Lucy Comly, and I began immediately on the proposed first phase which was to refine and sharpen the issues to be studied. Our efforts were directed at finding out what has been and is being done in adult education, and what the future needs seem to be.

For this purpose, we interviewed about two hundred people in person or by telephone, sixty Education Department staff, and the rest persons knowledgeable about adult education both in New York and on the national level. We also read a large number of articles, books and reports on all aspects of adult education. The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of these initial explorations and indicate the directions we will be moving in the next few months.

CE004950

## II. INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Our first major conclusion is that the concept suggested by the term "lifelong learning" will be a central concern of education in the future. If this is correct, the concept of the "University of the State of New York" has more significance now than ever before in its history, for lifelong learning requires the involvement of all the components of the University - public, private and proprietary schools, SUNY, CUNY, and the private colleges and universities, libraries, museums, educational and cultural agencies and the public media. In addition, it requires the involvement of educating agencies outside the University's jurisdiction such as industry, the military, community organizations of all kinds, and the commercial media.

Lifelong learning takes in a wide range of activities - everything from special programs for high school dropouts, to full-time degree programs for persons seeking second-chance opportunities, to continuing education courses for professionals, to self-planned independent study projects. In fact, when asked to state what we mean by "adult education",* we have said that it refers to all educational activities of persons beyond the age of compulsory schooling who are not full-time students taking a normal sequence of programs in a traditional school, college or university.

---

* Other terms used in addition to "adult education" and "lifelong learning" are "continuing education", "recurrent education", "permanent education", and "non-traditional studies". Each of these terms may have a somewhat different connotation, depending upon the use by the particular author, but for our purposes they can be considered equivalent.

Partially as a result of the increasing proportion of adults in our population, and partially because of the growing awareness of the need for lifelong learning, there has been a recent spate of reports, articles and studies on adults as learners. Some have been the product of commissions, many with very distinguished members, while others have been the work of individuals. They contain data on past and present adult education, analyses of adults as learners, and innumerable recommendations for making lifelong learning a reality. We have been putting together selected passages from some of these documents for anyone interested in getting a quick overview of what is being written.

The recent Regents Position Paper on "The Articulation of Secondary and Postsecondary Education" puts the case for lifelong learning very well:

> There are even broader social changes leading us into a society which is comprehensively committed to lifetime learning. This is an era in which learning will be at or near the center of activity for a substantial portion of most individual's lives and will have direct influence on many functions of society. This state of society requires a rethinking of all former relationships and a recognition that each secondary, collegiate, and non-collegiate postsecondary educational institution be considered part of a single organism. It may be useful for each component of this body to concentrate upon certain services for which it had unique capabilities, but many of the issues and human needs do not lend themselves to segmental treatment and will require imaginative and energetic cooperative efforts. (Pages 5 - 6)

A common theme in much of the commentary on lifelong learning is the emphasis on making a distinction between learning and education and between education and "schooling". A lot of learning and education goes on outside of school and the older one gets the more this is and should be so. Formal instruction in school or college classrooms is an important source of adult learning, but so is life experience, on-the-job training, the

mass media, and self-directed study. A concern for ways to enhance lifelong learning leads necessarily to attention to all the ways adults learn, not just to formal settings.

This poses a problem for the Department as it considers its future role in lifelong learning: is it an Education Department, with all that implies for the range of its concerns, or is it primarily a Department of Schools, Colleges, Libraries and Museums?

Another common theme is the emphasis on the diversity of adults as learners. Adults differ widely in backgrounds, learning needs, learning styles, readiness for learning, and tolerance for formal instruction. Institutions catering to adult learning must recognize this diversity. There is always a temptation to treat adults as a single group, but this is to miss an important point about them.

Thus, in the search for appropriate policies for adult education there must be recognition that no single policy or program will meet all adult needs. There must be options and alternatives and, along with this, acceptance of the fact that most adults are capable of and will make the decisions as to which alternatives are best for them.

The interest in adult education is, as one might expect, not new. In 1938 the Board of Regents sponsored an inquiry into the "Character and Cost of Public Education in the State of New York", one product of which was a report entitled Adult Education, by F.W. Reeves, T. Fansler and C.O. Houle. Much of this study is still valid today and we will be endorsing some of its recommendations for action.

Since that time the Department has maintained a concern for the adult learner, although the exigencies of State funding cause an ebb and flow in the fortunes of programs for adults in the State.

With the initiation of such ventures as the network of public television stations, the State Library Systems, the College Proficiency Examinations, External Degrees, Empire State College, and the Adult Learning Centers, the State has opened new opportunities for adult learners.

As a result in part of such efforts, the number of adult or "non-traditional" students seems to be increasing - on this all studies agree, but the exact number involved is itself an issue. For example, a study based on U.S. Census data says that nationwide there were 15 million adults engaged in all forms of learning activities in 1972; an ETS study puts the number in that year at about 32 million; a Carnegie Commission report indicates 48 million in 1970; and there are other estimates that go higher, including a projection by Stanley Moses that the number in 1975 will be 80 million. Part of the problem is definitional, but it goes beyond that to the methods used for collecting data, and the size of survey samples. Clearly one thing that is needed is better data on the adult student.

The number of adult learners is growing in part because education appears to be "addictive" - the more people have, the more they want. Thus, as the large, post-war, more highly educated age groups move through the adult years, it can be anticipated that the numbers involved in education will increase.

At the same time, however, there are large numbers of adults who are not very well reached by the present adult education efforts -- generally these are less educated, lower income, older, often unemployed, and disproportionately from minority groups. A recent report of the National Advisory Council on Adult Education, A Target Population in Adult Education, is only the most recent effort to make a forceful case for the relationship between low levels of school attainment and such other factors as high unemployment rates, low lifetime earnings, and lower occupational levels.

According to the 1970 census of the New York State population twenty-five years and older, 47 percent or nearly five million persons had less than high school completion. Of these, nearly 250,000 had no schooling. While many of these people are older, under present secondary school holding rates, approximately 2 million people will reach 25 years of age in the next 25 years without having completed high school. Added to this will be whatever migrants come into the State with less than high school completion. Yet in 1973-74 there were less than 24,000 individuals enrolled in adult basic education programs and in high school equivalency programs.

Nothing that we have seen to date suggests that there will be significant reductions in the numbers of individuals with less than adequate levels of schooling without considerably greater efforts than those now underway. Yet in the next 25 years low levels of school attainment will be an even greater personal, economic and social disability than in the past. Thus, there is here an area for further investigation in the course of this study.

While there are serious gaps in adult participation in education, for those who do participate, the range and variety of their learning experiences

is also impressive. There seems to be hardly a subject that someone is not studying, from acupuncture to zoology, or a setting which is not being used as a learning environment - from living room to commuter train - from classes offered before the work day begins to extended periods of on-campus study. People study to earn credentials; they study for the sheer pleasure of learning and for such practical purposes as learning to repair their own cars or TV sets. Some people seem to spend every spare moment in study, others spend only a few hours a year in an organized learning activity; but there are apparently very few people who do not spend some time each year in planned learning activities - either self-directed or in courses. In sample populations studied by Allen Tough and his associates it was found that on the average individuals spend 700 hours per year in such self-directed learning. This is considerably more than the 450 or so hours a full-time college student spends in class in a year.

We are collecting brief case studies to illustrate these generalizations. In addition, with grants from HEA, Title I, several regional projects are doing surveys and analyses of both participants and non-participants in adult education programs. These surveys should provide valuable data on participants and on the barriers to participation.

As the numbers and variety of participants have increased, so too have the opportunities available to them. Institutions have been remarkably responsive to the interests of adult learners. The traditional "providers" - school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, two and four-year colleges, universities, trade, technical, business and correspondence schools - have all been expanding their offerings to adults.

The mass media, particularly television, are the most potent educating forces in our society. Professional societies in such areas as law, medicine, accounting and engineering provide for or encourage the continuing professional education of their members - indeed, some are pressing to make this a mandatory requirement for relicensing. Many employers, including government agencies and the military, provide or pay for the education of employees. Trade associations such as the American Banking Institute have large-scale programs. It may be, that more education is conducted by business and industry than by all of the other educating agencies combined.* Labor unions have negotiated employee education benefits, although the proportion of those eligible who take advantage of the opportunity has, as yet, been limited. The Cooperative Extension Service, with its network of field agents, provides an array of services to adults. Community organizations such as churches, Y's, Kiwanis, and the League of Women Voters, are additional sources. And, of course, the Education Department's Adult Basic Education, Proficiency Examination and External Degree Programs are significant examples of its responsiveness.

---

* The Kimberly-Clark Corporation has this year instituted an interesting employee "Educational Opportunities Plan" that has already increased employee participation considerably. It has three parts:

1. An annual educational entitlement, the amount related to the company's annual growth in profits, which can be used for a broad range of educational activities.
2. A savings plan with company and employee contribution through which the higher education of family members can be assisted.
3. Paid educational leave for extended periods of study for up to one year.

To support these generalizations we are collecting examples of the offerings of different types of providers, and our file is getting very large. Several of the regional HEA, 1965, Title I projects are compiling catalogues of providers and their offerings.

The foregoing discussion suggests that, for some people, lifelong learning is already a reality. They have opportunities for learning, both formal and informal, when and where they want them at a cost they are willing to pay; and somewhere, someplace, nearly every adult learning need is being met to some extent. But the opportunities are not equally available to everyone: a person upstate really does not have access to a course offered in New York City, nor to one that is too costly or offered at an inconvenient time or place; and, of course, if its existence is unknown to him there is not even a possibility of access.

The foregoing observations have led us to conclude that there is a great deal going on in adult education that needs to be more widely known, much that needs to be done to make opportunities for lifelong learning available to all, and many very sound proposals for making this happen. What is <u>not</u> needed is just another study with yet another set of recommendations; what is needed is a program for <u>action</u>.

## III. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

We are, therefore, proceeding to lay the foundation for a process for gaining support for a set of action proposals. We emphasize "action" because we are concerned with the number of studies that result in thick reports that end up on the shelf with no visible impact. This happens, we believe, because much of the usual study effort goes into gathering data and developing long lists of recommendations, leaving little time or energy to develop support for the recommendations and to follow through in the complex process needed to achieve implementation. We think that there are enough good studies already done on which to base a program of action. This is not to say that all the data possible has been collected, nor that further analyses will not be needed. We do say that there is enough data and enough sensible recommendations already "on the table" to support an effort to sort out which recommendations deserve implementation and then to take the steps necessary to see that they are implemented.

We propose, therefore, to cull from all the various studies that have been done a small set of recommendations that seem most to meet the needs identified in our original study statement. These we will put together in working papers. These papers would be the starting point for a process for achieving commitment to action. That process, we believe, must involve those people who can be influential in supporting or blocking the implementation of any recommendation. This includes representatives of all of the providers as well as adult learners, Legislators, the Governor's staff and the Board of Regents. We start with the assumption that different groups have different priorities and conceptions of what is

needed. If each presses for its own particular views, little action will occur. What must happen as a result of interaction is the negotiation of a small set of proposals which most key groups and individuals are willing to support. We think this can be done through a series of appropriately designed meetings held throughout the State. We are exploring ideas about how such meetings might be most effectively conducted. The goal would be a program that can be presented to the Legislature or Congress with some reasonable expectation that it will be adopted.

As a start, we have identified the following five issues that might serve as the focus for such discussions:

1. Financing
2. Information
3. Counseling
4. Adult Learning Goals
5. The Role of the Media, Particularly Television

Even as we work on this "agenda for action", there is an immediate step that can be taken which is to give increased public visibility to the idea of lifelong learning. We need to make people aware that continuing learning is a necessary, important and satisfying part of adult life and that there are many opportunities in New York State for learning and getting help in finding how and where best to learn. We shall be looking for ways to accomplish this objective and will encourage others to do likewise.

## IV. AGENDA FOR ACTION

### 1. Financing

Many of the problems in this, as in every field, come down to a matter of money - both how much is available and how it is distributed. Surveys of would-be adult learners indicate that the greatest barrier to more participation in adult education is cost. At present, there is limited State or Federal financing for adult part-time education. Most of what is now done is supported by students themselves, by employers, including the military, and by local communities. In recent years a number of proposals for financing lifelong learning have been made. Some propose funding to institutions, as general aid or for programs to meet the needs of specified target groups, or to deal with particular societal problems such as health or poverty. Other proposals are based on the concept of providing funds to individuals, leaving to them the decisions on what they want to study, when and where. The Regents have already committed themselves to the eventual extension of the present tuition assistance program to part-time students and to the elimination of age barriers to the use of these funds. Such measures will increase access to higher education for older persons but still leave unmet the needs of those who need aid in addition to tuition and those who wish to undertake non-collegiate study. We are, therefore, considering ways to broaden support for the education of adults that will more fully meet varied needs.

We have started by summarizing a number of proposals for some form of direct aid to students. On the basis of this analysis we are working on a universal lifelong educational entitlement plan to guarantee access to education to individuals throughout their lives. Our objective is to devise

an approach that will meet the following objectives:

a) Provide access to appropriate educational opportunities at the time when an individual can best benefit from them.

b) Provide sufficient funds to meet both essential educational and maintenance costs.

c) Provide the individual with broad options as to the time and conditions under which he uses his entitlement.

d) Provide for an equitable sharing of the costs.

e) Be economically and politically feasible, given the competing demands for public resources.

f) Be compatible with and supportive of other public objectives such as protection of the public investment in existing institutions, insuring that those with less than minimum desirable educational attainments are reached and helped, and meeting the need for specific types of training.

In order for any specific plan for the public financing of adult education to have a chance of success, the case must be made that there is a public interest in such support. Many studies and reports have presented key arguments for such a case. We are pulling these together as part of the working paper on financing that would be used in the consensus building conferences that we propose to hold.

2. Information

In spite of the limitation of funds, there are, as we have noted, a wide variety of adult learning opportunities. A major problem both for the adult and the institution is finding out what is being offered. There just is no simple way at present for a person who wants to get help in learning something to find out all of the options that may be available, nor can any institution, including the Education Department, find out who is offering what at any particular time. This creates a problem for the would-be learner and for the provider wanting to avoid unnecessary duplication or fill an unmet need. There is widespread agreement among those we have consulted that this gap needs to be closed. and some of the HEA Title I regional projects are working on ways to close it in their regions. There is, however, a question as to whether such an effort is best undertaken on a regional basis, done centrally for the State as a whole, or through some combination.

We are putting together information on what is being done or proposed in this area. We intend to use it as a basis for working with a small group of knowledgeable people to develop a specific proposal that could then be one of the working papers for the meetings suggested above.

3. Counseling

Closely related to the need for information is the need for counseling. The 1938 Regents report says: "One of the greatest deficiencies in the total adult education program in New York State is the almost complete lack of adequate and satisfactory facilities for educational and vocational guidance." (page 125) We have hardly encountered a dissenting voice in our

testing of this conclusion at it applies today. We are, therefore, looking at what people are doing and proposing in this State and elsewhere and including this in the Study mentioned above.

One promising development, in which the State Library is participating, is the development of the library as a community learning center. This requires the expansion of the role of the librarian as an adult learning advisor and the creation of an information service on learning resources in the community of the kind discussed in the preceding section.

We propose to follow the library development closely and work with the State Library staff and others to develop proposals for the meetings suggested above.

4. Adult Learning Goals

Another area of concern is the substantive goals for adult education. In considering this topic, we propose to begin by investigating the nature and sources of adult knowledge. We propose to start this way because we recognize that adults do, after all, know and learn a great deal in many ways: through formal education, through what might be called the "hidden curriculum"—that delivered by the media and the programs and policies of public and private organizations; and through the process of living from day to day.

What do differing groups of adults know about any particular topic and what effect does that knowledge have on their attitudes, values and behavior? We would expect, of course, that adults in differing situations will differ in what they know and in how they use what they know have to reflect these differences.

As we get a better understanding of what adults know and how they learn, we then can ask how adequate or satisfactory that knowledge is. That leads to the further question: adequate or satisfactory to whom and by what criteria? For our purposes, the "whom" is society and the criteria will be derived from consideration of the needs of society. For example, society needs citizens capable of participating in public affairs. Do adults have the desired knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior? Or, if there is an excessive amount of unemployment or crime, are these changes in adult learning that might help to alleviate these problems?

It is only after we have begun to get answers to questions like these that we can begin to consider whether there are different or additional things that some adults need to know. Those then become learning goals for

adults and it becomes possible to use the information about the current sources of adult knowledge to determine how goals might best be achieved. For example, should it be done through formal education or through efforts to alter the "hidden curriculum"? The critical public policy issues are to determine by whom and how such questions should be answered and whether there is a role for government.

These are, obviously, large and complicated issues and cannot possibly be addressed initially over the whole spectrum of society's concerns. We, therefore, propose to narrow our focus to a few key topics. With respect to these topics, we want to find out, first, what is already being done and by whom. If there is not enough being done, we shall determine what further needs to be done and how much we can do with our resources. Once we learn how to proceed, it will then be possible to treat other topics more readily.

We plan to begin our investigations by looking at the matter of adult knowledge regarding children and youth.

This topic is chosen because it links adult learning to the education of school and college age youth which is the major concern of the Education Department. It also includes, as a subtopic, the even more specific interest of the Department in the relation of parents to their children.

There are many youth problems such as alienation, lack of motivation to learn, and anti-social behavior, that may result in part from the inadequate understanding on the part of adults generally and parents more specifically about how to help children and young people as they grow and develop. Efforts directed at adults might do more to deal with some of the problems of youth than efforts directed at the young people themselves. If so, we

will then be able to consider whether or not there are certain learning goals in this area that should be a matter of public policy concern. The following are the kinds of issues that will be considered:

1. Is there some minimum level of knowledge and skill regarding the young that adults and parents should have? This question leads to a consideration of the meaning of adult minimum competencies that might prove more productive than the present use of high school graduation or its equivalent as the measure. By this measure, nearly half of the adult population of New York State has not reached the minimum and additional thousands every year who fail to complete high school will similarly fail to measure up. However, many of those who fail to graduate may nevertheless have the competencies needed to perform adequately, while some high school graduates may lack such competencies. Such considerations have led to efforts to define and measure minimum adult competencies by other means. We will study these developments for their implications for the approach we propose to follow. If it should turn out that the numbers of adults with less than the minimum competencies are very large, while the numbers being served by present programs are small, we shall explore alternative ways of helping people reach the necessary levels.
2. Are there goals that are of such general importance that efforts should be exerted to help all adults achieve them?
3. Are there things that professionals who deal with children and young people, particularly professionals licensed and relicensed by the Education Department, should know in order to be licensed

and relicensed? The questions of requirements for licensed professionals and of mandating continuing education for relicensing are under study by the Office of Deputy Commissioner for Higher and Professional Education. We would hope that our investigation might be helpful to that office.

As soon as we have established a procedure that is productive in getting answers to the questions of adult learning goals and the related public policy issues, we then propose to undertake a similar examination in the following areas of adult learning:

a. Public Affairs, asking such questions as what do adults know about the various agencies of government; what are the sources of their knowledge?

b. Occupations, asking such questions as what do adults who need or want a change of jobs or careers know about how to do so?

c. The Elderly, asking such questions as what do younger adults know about older adults? This will be a parallel investigation to the first one on adult knowledge about children and youth.

We would hope to enlist many people from many differing disciplines in the explorations that we have outlined.

5. The Role of Media, Particularly Television

The major educational influence on adults today is television. Its impact on the daily lives of most peoples certainly exceeds that of any other medium and it is a major deliverer of the "hidden curriculum" mentioned earlier. We propose, therefore, to focus special attention on the role of television as we examine adult learning. We want to see what it now does and then consider whether there are any things that it might do differently. We propose to look at both public and commercial television as well as to consider the potential impact of

cable television. Our focus here as throughout this study will be on the public policy issues, including how, if at all, a state agency should try to influence what is presented on television.

V. Timetable

In the preceeding section, we have set forth an agenda. From now through February we will be developing the working papers that will be used as the starting point for meetings throughout the State during March, April and May. By the end of May we hope that we will have obtained consensus among all interested groups on a small number of proposals for consideration by the Board of Regents and, where appropriate, by the 1976 Legistature. We also expect to know by then where more work is needed on the issues we have identified above and what additional issues should be on our agenda for next year. A related outcome should be commitments to study and action by others wherever they identify a role for themselves.

The ultimate outcome of these endeavors should be the support of a network of services that will make the State of New York a "learning society". It is our firm conviction that our society, education generally, and the University of the State of New York stand on the threshold of a major development. If we have the will and determination to capitalize on all that has happened until now, we can make active participation in learning a vital part of the life of most individuals in our society, and the support of that learning can become one of the most important enterprises in the State.